AP012-2F 3/88

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

1987 OFFICIALS SURVEY

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

JANUARY 11, 1988

In general, how do you grade the current performance of the following in their treatment of the problems faced by municipal governments.

Percentages

Letter Grade - Description - Number Value -	A Excellent (4)	B Good (3)	C Fair (2)	D Poor (1)	F Inferior (0)	Avg. Grade on 4-point scale
Group						
Federal Government	0	6	24	49	21	1.1
State Government	1	16	44	33	6	1.7
Local Media	6	31	37	18	8	2.0
National Media	1	13	42	34	10	1.6
Presidential Candidates	1	13	45	35	6	1.6

Grade the federal Congress on how responsibly it is dealing with the following issues:

Percentages

Letter Grade - Description - Number Value -	A Excellent (4)	B Good (3)	C Fair (2)	D Poor (1)	F Inferior (0)	Avg. Grade on 4-point scale
Issue						
Housing	0	9	41	40	10	1.5
Illegal drugs	0	8	35	43	14	1.4
Disposal of hazardous material and waste	0	7	36	42	15	1.4
Unemployment	0	12	40	39	9	1.6
Federal budget deficit	0	2	13	38	47	0.7
Poverty	0	4	29	45	22	1.2

Grade the current presidential administration on how responsibly it is dealing with the following issues:

Percentages

Letter Grade - Description - Number Value -	A Excellent (4)	B Good (3)	C Fair (2)	D Poor (1)	F Inferior (0)	Avg. Grade on 4-point scale
Issue						
Housing	1	8	31	35	25	1.2
Illegal Drugs	2	14	32	33	19	1.5
Disposal of hazardous material and waste	0	7	29	42	22	1.2
Unemployment	2	16	28	33	21	1.4
Federal budget deficit	1	7	14	35	43	0.9
Poverty	0	4	25	38	33	1.0

The condition of the economy nationally and in your city is important. Characterize the strength of each in 1987 and what you expect in 1988.

	Percentage			
	Strong & Growing	Growing Not Strong	At a Standstill	In Decline
Past Year - 1987				
National Economy in 1987	12	51	25	12
My City Economy in 1987	34	37	22	7
Next Year - 1988				
National Economy in 1988	10	48	28	14
My City Economy in 1988	35	46	15	4

Managing the Municipal Budget

How do you think your city/town will deal with the following areas of the municipal budget in the year ahead?

Taxes	In the Year Ahead
Raise	35%
Constant	59
Reduce	3
Don't Know	3
	100%

Fees and Charges	
Raise	68
Constant	28
Reduce	1
Don't know	3
	100%

Number of Municipal Employees	
Raise	22%
Constant	60
Reduce	16
Don't know	2
	100%

Budget Spending	
Raise	48%
Constant	36
Reduce	14
Don't know	2
	100%

How do you think your city/town will deal with the following areas of the municipal budget in the year ahead?

	Total	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
Will Raise	35	55	32	34	32
Will Hold Constant	59	43	62	57	64
Will Reduce	3	2	3	7	1
Don't Know	3	0	3	2	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Fees and Charges

	Total	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
Will Raise	68	75	62	68	77
Will Hold Constant	28	23	34	28	22
Will Reduce	1	0	0	0	0
Don't Know	3	2	4	4	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Employees

	Total	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
Will Raise	22	23	22	21	23
Will Hold Constant	60	63	66	58	56
Will Reduce	16	12	10	18	20
Don't Know	2	2	2	3	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Budget Spending

	Total	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
Will Raise	48	75	49	43	45
Will Hold Constant	36	18	39	34	37
Will Reduce	14	2	11	19	17
Don't Know	2	5	1	4	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Mark the response which best reflects the ability of your community to provide services during the next year **without increasing tax rates**.

It will be possible **TO MAINTAIN** services without increasing tax rates 53%

It will **NOT BE POSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN** services without increasing tax rates 34%

An **EXPANSION** of services levels will be possible without increasing tax rates 13%

Which three of the listed community conditions are creating the most important problems in your city. Please mark three only.

Percentage of 596 officials listing conditions as one of three most important in their community.

Overall Economic Conditions	36%
Streets, Roads & Sidewalks	30
City Fiscal Conditions	25
Solid Waste Disposal	22
Unemployment	19
Water & Sewer Treatment	17
Crime	16
Drugs	15
Education	15
Availability of Low Income Housing	14
Affordability of House Prices	10
Cost of Energy	8
Public Transportation	7
Homelessness	6
Air Quality	6
Affordability of Rental Housing	6
Availability of Social Services	6
Cost of Living	6
Poverty	5
Health Care	5
Local Mortgage Conditions	5
Interest Rates on City Borrowing	4
AIDS	3
Supply of Energy	1

Indicate how each of the twenty-four conditions have changed in your community during the last year.

	Condition	Improved	Worsened	No Change	Not Sure
a	Unemployment	47	18	32	3
b	Overall Economic Conditions	45	22	31	2
c	Interest Rates on City Borrowing	24	22	41	13
d	Local Mortgage Conditions	23	32	38	7
e	City Fiscal Conditions	33	33	34	0
f	Cost of Living	10	36	51	3
g	Cost of Energy	13	41	42	4
h	Supply of Energy	21	5	71	3
i	Availability of Low Income Housing	15	37	44	4
j	Water and Sewer Treatment	44	17	38	1
k	Streets, Roads and Sidewalks	47	30	23	0
l	Public Transportation	20	19	57	4
m	Homelessness	6	40	46	8
n	Availability of Social Services	16	26	55	3
o	Crime	18	41	40	1
p	Poverty	7	35	54	4
q	Drugs	10	54	31	5
r	Education	39	20	38	3
s	Health Care	24	23	49	4
t	Affordability of House Prices	20	40	38	2
u	Affordability of Rental Housing	20	38	39	3
v	Air Quality	16	19	61	4
w	Solid Waste Disposal	20	35	44	1
x	AIDS	2	35	29	34

Who Answered the Survey

What is the elective office which you hold?

Mayor	26%
City Council	64
Other Elected	1
Do Not Hold Elected Office	9
	100%

What region of the country is your city/town located in?

Northeast	8%
South	37
Midwest	29
West	26
	100%

Population size of your community.

Under 10,000	14%
10,001 - 49,999	45
50,000 - 99,999	12
100,000 - 299,999	15
Over 300,000	14
	100%

A total of 596 city officials responded to NLC poll of city officials conducted December 1987, during NLC's Congress of Cities in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Responding Officials by City Size and Region
(number of officials)

Population Class	Percent	Total Number	Region			
			Northeast	South	Midwest	West
Under 10,000	14	81	2	44	12	23
10 to 50,000	45	261	18	89	99	55
50 to 100,000	12	70	11	17	20	22
100 to 300,000	16	91	10	37	22	22
Over 300,000	13	79	6	28	17	28
Total Number	—	**582***	**47**	**215**	**170**	**150**
Percentage	**100**	**100**	**8**	**36**	**30**	**26**

*14 respondents did not provide size or region information.

NEWS

National League of Cities

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Congress and Administration Get Low Grades from City Leaders; Presidential Candidates Marginally Better Entering 1988 Campaign

Leaders of the nation's cities and towns do not have much confidence in the ability of Congress or the Administration to deal with important issues affecting local government, according to a survey released today by the National League of Cities.

Responding to a questionnaire distributed at NLC's annual meeting in mid-December, a majority, or close to it, of 596 local officials from 410 cities graded the work done in Washington as "poor" or "inferior" on six key federal policy issues. The issues were housing, illegal drugs, disposal of hazardous materials and waste, unemployment, poverty and the federal budget deficit.

The lowest mark was assigned to Congress for its efforts with the deficit, followed by the Administration, also for efforts with the deficit.

(more)

On local budget matters, nearly half the survey group said they expect to increase local spending this year, 35 percent expect to raise local taxes, and 68 percent expect to increase local user fees. On the negative side, budget and personnel cuts were foreseen more frequently by officials in western and midwestern cities than in southern or northeastern cities.

Alan Beals, NLC executive director, called the findings "a lousy report card for our national leaders. They are still 'playing hooky' from the school of responsible government, while local officials are being burdened with the costs of doing someone else's homework along with their own."

Compared to the current federal leadership, the presidential candidates received higher marks overall from the survey group, getting a 1.6 rating on a 4-point scale (C-), while the current leadership got a rating of 1.1 (D). A mark of 2.0 is "fair" or a "C," 3.0 is "good" or "B," and 4.0 "excellent" or "A." Lower grades are "poor" or "D" at 1.0, and "inferior" or "F," a zero.

"While it may be encouraging to think the future could bring improvement in some of these areas, it's shameful that things have gotten so bad, and that even some improvements may leave much to be desired," said Beals.

State government received a 1.7 or (C-) for its performance in dealing with municipal issues, the national news media a rating of 1.6 (C-) for their treatment of problems faced by local governments, and local news media a rating of 2.0 (C) for their efforts.

(more)

The survey findings on community conditions buttressed the low grades assigned for Washington's performance on important issues facing hometown America. Drug problems worsened during the past year, according to 54 percent of the respondents, and the Administration and Congress both got ratings between "poor" and "fair" for their efforts against illegal drugs.

On housing, the rating was again between "poor" and "fair" for the national leadership, while worsening conditions were reported for homelessness by 40 percent of the respondents, affordability of house prices by 40 percent, affordability of rental housing by 38 percent, and availability of low income housing by 37 percent.

Both Congress and the Administration got "poor" ratings for dealing with the problems associated with poverty, and 35 percent said poverty conditions worsened in their communities.

In dealing with the problems surrounding hazardous materials and waste disposal, Washington's efforts were rated between "poor" and "fair," while 35 percent of the respondents said solid waste disposal has become a worse problem for them, and among local priorities, it shot up from tenth position in last year's survey to fourth for 1988.

In unemployment, Washington got the same low marks, while nearly half of the respondents, 47 percent, said their local unemployment situation improved, probably reflecting the role of continued economic growth in job creation.

(more)

The survey group was more optimistic about local economic performance in 1988 than in 1987, but less confident about the national economy. Eighty-one percent foresee local economic growth in 1988, compared to 71 percent who said conditions improved in 1987. Fifty-eight percent expect national economic growth to continue in 1988, compared to 63 percent who felt there was significant national economic growth in 1987.

While a majority of the survey group expected to hold the line or increase local budgets and workforces in 1988, cutbacks were projected more frequently by officials from the West and Midwest than by officials in the Northeast or South. Nineteen percent of the midwestern officials and 17 percent from western cities expect budget reductions in 1988, compared to 11 percent in the South and 2 percent in the Northeast.

Workforce reductions were foreseen by 20 percent of the western officials and 18 percent from the Midwest, compared to 11 percent in the Northeast and 10 percent in the South.

Looking at conditions in their communities, the top five areas of improvement were in unemployment, cited by 47 percent of the respondents, condition of streets, roads and sidewalks (47 percent), overall economic conditions (45 percent), and water and sewer treatment (44 percent).

The top five areas in which conditions worsened were drugs (54 percent), crime (41 percent), cost of energy (41 percent), homelessness (40 percent), and affordability of house prices (40 percent). Problems showing the least degree of improvement over the past year were AIDS, homelessness and poverty.

(more)

The community conditions considered most important for local government action in 1988 -- overall economic conditions, streets and sidewalks, and city fiscal conditions -- all focused on supporting economic growth. Those priorities were followed by solid waste disposal, unemployment, water and sewer treatment, crime, drugs, education, availability of low income housing, and affordability of house prices, all mentioned by 10 percent or more of the survey responses as one of the top three issues for local action in 1988.

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